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Item 9 of the provisional agenda*
High-level ministerial segment and policy dialogue with heads of international organizations

High-level ministerial segment and policy dialogue with heads of international organizations

Note by the Secretary-General**

Summary

The high-level ministerial segment of the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests will focus on the future actions of the international arrangement on forests and the contribution of the Forum to the review of the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, as well as the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, as mandated by resolutions of the Economic and Social Council, as well as of the General Assembly. The format and modalities of the high-level ministerial segment, plenary sessions and round-table discussions are described, including the policy dialogue with heads of member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and of other forest-related international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments. The multi-stakeholder dialogue will be an integral part of the high-level segment.

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Introduction

1. In its resolution 2000/35 of 18 October 2000, the Economic and Social Council decided that the main objective of the international arrangement on forests would be to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to that end. In order to achieve that objective and to carry out the six principal functions of the international arrangement as specified in its resolution, the Council also decided to establish the United Nations Forum on Forests as one of its subsidiary bodies, and to invite the executive heads of relevant organizations of the United Nations system and heads of other relevant international regional organizations, institutions and instruments to form a Collaborative Partnership on Forests to support the work of the Forum.

2. In the same resolution, the Economic and Social Council further decided that the Forum should hold a high-level ministerial segment for two to three days, as required. The high-level segment could include a one-day policy dialogue with the heads of organizations participating in the Partnership, as well as other forest-related international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments. The Forum should ensure the opportunity to receive and consider inputs from representatives of major groups as identified in Agenda 21, in particular through the organization of multi-stakeholder dialogues.

3. In its resolution 1/1, entitled "Multi-year programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for 2001-2005", the Forum recognized that clear strategic direction and strong political commitment to sustainable forest management were key to the successful fulfilment of every aspect of its mandate and also decided to hold high-level ministerial segments at its second and fifth sessions.

4. As part of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum, at its fifth session the Forum will focus on the following elements: (a) review of progress and consideration on future actions; (b) on the basis of the assessment referred to in paragraph 2 (e) of Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/35 establishing the Forum, consideration of the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests with a view to recommending them to the Council and through it to the General Assembly; and (c) review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, as referred to in paragraph 17 of Council resolution 2000/35. The Forum will also consider the common items that are to be addressed at each session. In accordance with the provisional agenda for the fifth session (E/CN.18/2005/1), the high-level ministerial segment will also have before it the report of the Secretary-General on the linkages between forests and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (E/CN.18/2005/__).[1]

5. In view of the above, it is proposed that the high-level ministerial segment focus on the future international arrangement on forests and the contribution of the Forum to the review of the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, as well as the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, as mandated by resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

6. Taking into careful consideration the views of the Bureau of the Forum at its fifth session and member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, it is proposed that the two-day high-level ministerial segment consist of plenary sessions and round-table discussions. A ministerial dialogue might also be held, as necessary, which could focus on the above-mentioned topics, with heads of member organizations of the Partnership, as well as of other forest-related international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, and with high-level representatives of major groups.

7. It is proposed that the plenary, consisting of three sessions, focus and provide guidance on the following themes: (a) the role of forests and the Forum in the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit and the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields; and (b) the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, which should also address the institutional framework of the Forum, including its position within the United Nations system, as well as actions for the future.

8. The Bureau also decided to enrich the high-level segment with round-table discussions at which to address some of the most pressing forest policy issues needing increased international attention as well as new and emerging forests-related issues, where concrete action may be called for by the Forum. The round-table discussions will also provide an opportunity for direct dialogue on an informal basis among Ministers, and heads of member organizations of the Partnership, as well as of other forest-related international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, and representatives of major groups.

I. Plenary session

9. In the consideration of the role of forests and the Forum in the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit and the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, the high-level ministerial segment may wish to refer to the report of the Secretary-General on the linkages between forests and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

10. It may be noted that in its resolution 58/291 of 6 May 2004, the General Assembly decided to convene in New York in 2005 a high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly with the participation of Heads of State and Government, to undertake a comprehensive review of the progress made in the fulfilment of all commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, including the internationally agreed development goals and the global partnership required for their achievement, and of the progress made in the integrated and coordinated implementation, at the national, regional and international levels, of the outcomes and commitments of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, on the basis of a comprehensive report to be submitted by the Secretary-General.

11. In this regard, the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2004/44 of 22 July 2004 requested the functional commissions, the regional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies to contribute to the preparation of its input to the

high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly. It is therefore proposed that a ministerial message be sent to that meeting.

12. Regarding the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and consideration of future actions, it may be noted, that in paragraph 17 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/35, the Council decided that the international arrangement on forests should be dynamic and should adapt to evolving conditions and that the effectiveness of that arrangement should be reviewed in five years, and also decided that the five-year review of that arrangement should also address the institutional framework of the Forum, including its position within the United Nations system.

13. For the above-mentioned review, it may be noted that detailed information is contained in the reports of the Secretary-General on (a) the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, as referred to in paragraph 17 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/35 (E/CN.18/2005/__); (b) the review of progress and consideration of future actions (E/CN.18/2005/__); and (c) on the basis of the assessment referred to in paragraph 2 (e) of Council resolution 2000/35, consideration of the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests with a view to recommending them to the Council and through it to the General Assembly (E/CN.18/2005/__), as well as the report of the meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Consideration with a View to Recommending the Parameters of a Mandate for Developing a Legal Framework on All Types of Forests (New York, 7-10 September 2004) (E/CN.18/2005/2).

14. Decisions by the Forum are expected on the future of, and the action needed on, the international arrangement on all types of forests. In this regard, Ministers may wish to provide guidance to the Forum on the matter, such as recommendations on the goals, targets, key functions and modalities of future international arrangements on forests, the institutional framework of the Forum, including its position within the United Nations system, and principal forest policy means and actions for the future.

II. Round tables

15. It is proposed that at the round tables, the discussions should focus on two critical issues: (a) restoration of the world's forests; and (b) forests, conflicts and governance. It is hoped that the round-table discussions will be conducive to a free exchange of ideas on those critical issues between the Ministers, heads of international organizations and representatives of major groups.

III. Ministerial dialogue with heads of organizations and members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

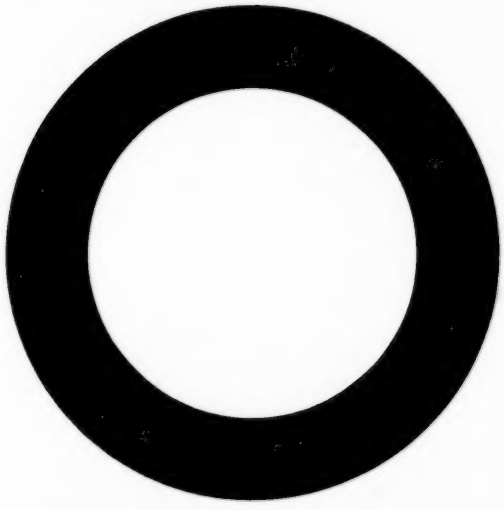
16. A ministerial dialogue may also be held, as necessary, that would focus on the above-mentioned topics, with heads of member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, with the participation of heads of other forest-related international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, and representatives of major groups. It may be noted that the Partnership consists of 14 international organizations, namely, the Centre for International Forestry Research

(CIFOR); the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO); the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO); the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; the secretariat of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF); the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests; the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF); the World Bank; and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

17. For the dialogue, it may be noted that relevant and useful information is contained in the note by the Secretariat on enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination (E/CN.18/2005/5), as well as in the information document entitled "Collaborative Partnership on Forests Framework 2005" (E/CN.18/2005/INF/1).

Notes

[1] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.



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United Nations Forum on Forests
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Item 7 of the provisional agenda*
Enhanced cooperation and programme and policy coordination

Enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination

Note by the Secretariat**

Summary

The United Nations Forum on Forests and its secretariat have pursued a range of cooperative and coordination functions to promote and implement the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action and to achieve sustainable forest management at all levels. As a common item, addressed at each session, enhanced cooperation and coordination are viewed as a tool to foster closer collaboration between the Forum and other forest-related international organizations, institutions and instruments.

The present note provides an overview of progress made by the Forum and its secretariat in performing the function of enhanced coordination and cooperation on forests. It describes the activities undertaken, particularly since the Forum's fourth session, in building synergies with relevant United Nations bodies, international instruments and mechanisms, as well as intergovernmental and regional organizations and stakeholders. The note also describes some of the activities of the secretariat within the United Nations system, particularly within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. Underscoring future directions, this note puts forward some options to further enhance coordination and

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cooperation on forests. It is suggested, for consideration by the Forum, that greater collaboration and cooperation on sustainable forest management are needed across sectors, between the national focal points of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions and those of the Forum, between international and regional organizations and their secretariats, and within the United Nations system.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/35, of 18 October 2000, decided that the international arrangement on forests would perform six principal functions to achieve its main objective. One of these principal functions was to enhance cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues among relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, as well as to contribute to synergies among them, including coordination among donors. At its first session, the United Nations Forum on Forests made provision in its multi-year programme of work for enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination to be addressed as a common item at each session of the Forum. The Forum also decided to undertake active efforts to develop synergies with members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; and the Commission on Sustainable Development and other functional commissions of the Council, as well as other relevant international and regional processes and organizations, institutions and instruments.

2. The present note focuses on the activities that have been undertaken since the fourth session of the Forum on enhanced cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination. Section I covers enhanced cooperation with, and between, Partnership members, enhanced cooperation with stakeholders, and country- and organization-led initiatives in support of the Forum, and advances in forest partnerships and processes. Section II deals with policy and programme coordination with United Nations bodies, section III with regional involvement, and section IV with international instruments and organizations relevant to the forest sector. The note draws from national reports, country- and organization-led initiatives and the report of the meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Consideration with a View to Recommending the Parameters of a Mandate for Developing a Legal Framework on All Types of Forests (E/CN.18/2005/2) held in New York in September 2004. It highlights the lessons learned and challenges encountered, as well as new opportunities in respect of this item for the years ahead. Points for discussion are also put forward for the consideration of the Forum on how to further enhance coordination and cooperation on forests. The report of the Secretary-General on the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (E/CN.18/2005/__) also presents information on cooperation and policy and programme coordination, based on responses from member States, Partnership members and other relevant organizations and forest-related processes, to the voluntary questionnaire to facilitate the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at the fifth session of the Forum, contained in the annex to Forum resolution 4/4 on the process to facilitate that review.

3. Enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination have been central to the work of the Forum. At its first session, the Forum, in addition to adopting resolution 1/1 on its multi-year programme of work for 2001-2005, also adopted resolution 1/3 on the initiation of the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in support of the Forum. At its second session, the Forum, in resolution 2/1, adopted a Ministerial Declaration and a Message from the Forum to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. That Declaration, inter alia, underlined the unique character of the international arrangement on forests; stressed the need for the Forum to promote synergies with United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related conventions,[1] and encouraged effective cooperation

between the secretariats of the Forum and the Convention on Biological Diversity in areas of mutual interest. At its third session, the Forum adopted resolution 3/4 on enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination, in which it stressed the need to further strengthen the Forum, with the support of the Partnership members, as the key intergovernmental mechanism for facilitating and coordinating implementation of sustainable forest management. To advance cooperation with the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Forum, in the same resolution, welcomed the request of the Convention to work collaboratively on issues of common interest and requested the Coordinator and Head of the Forum secretariat to reflect the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests/United Nations Forum on Forests experiences on sustainable forest management at relevant meetings of the Convention. Also in resolution 3/4, the Forum invited the Global Environment Facility (GEF), within its mandate and respective operational programmes and strategies, to give due consideration to financing related forests projects. No specific resolution on enhanced cooperation was adopted at the fourth session, but member States reiterated the continuing importance of enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination.

I. Enhanced cooperation

A. Collaborative Partnership on Forests

4. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests has been instrumental in providing substantive support to the work of the Forum, and enhancing collaboration, cooperation and coordination; this has included joint forest-related initiatives among its members. In 2004, the Partnership convened two technical meetings of the Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting and three Expert Meetings on Harmonizing Forest-related Definitions for Use by Various Stakeholders. The Partnership also launched a new initiative on a Global Forest Information Service (GFIS). The majority of Partnership members have participated actively in the sessions of the Forum, providing technical advice and contributing to panel discussions. In 2004, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also provided direct support to the Forum secretariat through the secondment of staff. As a voluntary partnership, the Partnership receives guidance from the Forum, but each member takes direction from, and is accountable to, its own governing body. In this regard, many of the governing bodies of the members of the Partnership are calling for greater cooperation with the Forum. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests Framework 2005 (E/CN.18/2005/INF/1) provides an assessment of the progress of the Partnership since its inception in 2001, highlighting joint initiatives of Partnership members and describing other collaborative activities undertaken to promote sustainable forest management worldwide.

B. Stakeholder involvement

5. In order that stakeholder involvement may be enhanced, participation by major groups continues to be strengthened. Regular consultations with major group focal points were organized by the Secretariat throughout the year. Major groups prepared

substantive inputs to the meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Consideration with a View to Recommending the Parameters of a Mandate for Developing a Legal Framework on All Types of Forests, and major group representatives presented their perspectives at a panel discussion during this meeting. The panel and the subsequent reporting were well received by experts, government representatives and major group members. The level of participation will also be enhanced during the fifth session. Major groups are providing discussion papers and the Bureau for the fifth session of the Forum has decided to integrate the multi-stakeholder dialogue into the plenary and working group meetings, as well as into the high-level segment of the session. There is also a growing spirit of collaboration and partnership among the different groups as major group organizations continue to seek ways of leveraging each other's strengths and constituencies.

C. Country- and organization-led initiatives in support of the Forum

6. Country- and organization-led initiatives have been recognized as a fundamental part of the work of the Forum. Linked to different themes of the Forum's multi-year programme of work, these initiatives have provided a number of opportunities for experts to address the issues prior to Forum sessions. During the period 2001-2005, there will have been 17 such initiatives, 7 of which are taking place in preparation for the fifth session. The increased number of country- and organization-led initiatives attest to greater collaboration and partnership for sustainable forest management. It is noteworthy that during the past year three organization-led initiatives were organized by major groups. The initiatives exemplify the collaborative and constructive outlook of member States, and international and regional organizations, including Partnership members, as well as civil society representatives, in achieving sustainable forest management and advancing the work of the Forum. The diversification of workshops and expert meetings in various regions worldwide has also played a significant role in raising awareness of the work of the Forum, in promoting increased understanding of the issues and in facilitating discussions. The Forum secretariat has provided input and advice to all initiatives held in support of the Forum.

7. Recent examples include the symposium on "Gender and Forestry: Challenges to Sustainable Livelihoods and Forestry Management", held from 1 to 10 August 2004 in Kilimanjaro, the United Republic of Tanzania; the country-led initiative on lessons learned on sustainable forest management in Africa, with a concluding workshop, held from 18 to 22 October 2004 in Stockholm, Sweden; the Expert Meeting on Traditional Forest-related Knowledge and the Implementation of Related International Commitments, held from 6 to 10 December 2004 in San José, Costa Rica; the country-led initiative on the "Future of the International Arrangement on Forests", held from 25 to 28 January 2005 in Mexico; the organization-led initiative on "Practical Solutions to Combat Illegal Logging: Dialogue on Best Practice for Business and Civil Society", held from 8 to 10 March 2005 in Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region of China; the International Expert Meeting on Innovative Financial Mechanisms: Searching for Viable Alternatives to Secure the Basis for the Financial Sustainability of Forests, to be held from 29 March to 1 April 2005 in San José, Costa Rica; and the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration Global Forest Landscape Restoration Implementation Workshop, to be held from 4 to 8 April 2005 in Petropolis, Brazil.

These examples demonstrate the range of subjects covered by initiatives. They are useful in gathering a large number of country representatives, relevant organizations and major groups; disseminating information; facilitating detailed discussion and analysis; and highlighting the lessons learned on implementation and emerging forest-related issues. Within an informal setting, initiatives have covered an array of discussion topics extending from institutional and legal options on forests, the application of the principles of sustainable forest management, and social and gender aspects, to forest economic perspectives and environmental considerations. These initiatives provide valuable expert input to the work of the Forum, with reports being made available for consideration at the Forum sessions, and have influenced policy developments at the Forum.

D. Advances in forest partnerships and processes

8. A number of regional and international processes have developed around different themes of sustainable forest management, reflecting particular priorities in specific regions. The developments in respect of dialogue on criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management, as well as on forest law enforcement, governance and illegal international trade, have shown how it is possible to achieve networking and partnership within regions, and between processes, in order to benefit from experiences in different parts of the world. The Forum has been supportive and actively liaising with these partnerships, including the Asia Forest Partnership, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, a number of forest law enforcement and governance processes, the Model Forest Network for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the Montreal Process, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, the Tehran Process and other regional criteria and indicators-related processes. Some of these partnerships and processes are considered in more detail below.

9. *Asia Forest Partnership*. This Partnership was launched during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 by the Governments of Japan and Indonesia, with the support of other Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. It has three main objectives: control of illegal logging, control of forest fire, and rehabilitation and reforestation of degraded lands. Building on international and regional activities, cooperation has extended to areas such as developing forest policies, plans and programmes; building capacity for effective forest management; good governance and forest law enforcement; use of satellite data and mapping; participatory management; and intersectoral coordination within Governments. At its Fourth Meeting for the Promotion of Asian Forest Partnership, in Tokyo in December 2004, an Announcement on Strengthening the Asia Forest Partnership was adopted. The statement was aimed at giving clarity in its mandate and structure.

10. *Congo Basin Forest Partnership*. The Governments of South Africa and the United States of America, along with Conservation International, the World Wildlife Fund, the Wildlife Conservation Society and many other organizations, established the Congo Basin Forest Partnership to promote economic development, alleviate poverty, improve governance and enhance conservation of natural resources in the region. The Partnership builds on the commitment made at the 1999 Yaoundé Summit and plans to set up a network of national parks and protected areas, as well as transboundary protected areas, well-managed forestry concessions and assistance

to communities that depend on forest and wildlife resources, in 11 key landscapes in seven Central African countries: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. The Director of the Forum secretariat participated at the second Summit of Heads of State, held in Brazzaville in February 2005, where France accepted the task of coordinating partnership activities during the next two years. In the presence of the Heads of State of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, France and Gabon, and representatives of the Heads of State of Burundi, Sao Tome and Principe and Rwanda, a further commitment for the conservation and the sustainable management of the forest ecosystems in Central Africa was made.

11. *Model Forest Network for Latin America and the Caribbean.* Partners of the Model Forest Network include the Governments of Canada, Argentina, Chile and the Dominican Republic, the International Model Forest Network secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Network builds programmes for sustainable forest management that reflect the priorities, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that are unique to the region, and lends support to existing model forests.

12. *Processes on forest law enforcement, governance and illegal international trade.* The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation")[2] includes a commitment to "take immediate action on domestic forest law enforcement and illegal international trade in forest products, including in forest biological resources, with the support of the international community, and provide human and institutional capacity-building related to the enforcement of national legislation in those areas" (para. 45 (c)). The issue of illegal logging has become increasingly prominent in the international policy agenda. Several processes, internationally and regionally driven, have been addressing forest law enforcement, governance and associated trade in the forest sector. Since the first session of the Forum, two regional Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) ministerial processes have been initiated, in Eastern Asia and the Pacific, and in Africa. These ministerial-level political processes have mobilized international commitments from producer, consumer and donor Governments to increase efforts to prevent illegal logging, as well as associated illegal trade and corruption in the forest sector. At the fourth session of the Forum, the Russian Federation announced its intention to host a Europe and Northern Asia FLEG ministerial process, and preparations are going forward to hold the process in September 2005. Although no official FLEG process is under way in Latin America and the Caribbean, civil society there has been active in generating awareness of these pressing issues. The World Bank has been facilitating these regional FLEG initiatives, along with other international organizations, donor agencies and Governments.

13. *Tehran Process.* A strategic plan of action for the Tehran Process is currently being developed by the Low Forest Cover Countries (LFCC) secretariat to strengthen capacity of these countries, and to promote the inclusion of forestry and forest-related issues in national development agendas. The new programme designation on land degradation under GEF is expected to provide financial assistance to countries in the region to help in the implementation of relevant Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action. Given the importance of rehabilitation and conservation efforts, the

Forum may wish to offer further support to actions in this field and to participate in key meetings and activities of the Tehran Process.

14. *Criteria and indicators processes.* At present, the nine major international criteria and indicators processes (the African Timber Organization, the Dry Forest Asia Initiative, the Dry-Zone Africa Process, ITTO, the Lepaterique Process, the Montreal Process, the Near East Process, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe and the Tarapoto Proposal) involve 149 countries and 85 per cent of the world's forests. These criteria and indicators processes have played a major role in the development of a common understanding of what constitutes sustainable forest management. At its fourth session, the Forum, in its resolution 4/3, acknowledged seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management, drawn from the criteria identified by existing criteria and indicators processes, as offering a reference framework for sustainable forest management. Furthermore, the Global Forest Resources Assessment update in 2005, undertaken by FAO, is being structured around six of the seven criteria and indicators thematic elements, thus contributing in a harmonized way to providing data for a global overview of progress towards sustainable forest management. The Forum secretariat has been actively involved with most of the processes. Stakeholders at the international, regional, national and subnational levels have attached importance to criteria and indicators as providing a framework for policy formulation and monitoring of sustainable forest management and national forest programmes. International organizations, including several members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as non-governmental organizations, have provided support to the development of these processes and have assisted countries in testing and implementing criteria and indicators at the national and subnational levels. These processes are also directing efforts towards the development and implementation of criteria and indicators relevant for the forest management unit, involving a range of partners, including forest owners, indigenous communities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

15. *Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration.* This Partnership, launched in March 2003, currently comprises more than 20 partners and sponsors, including nine members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, several Governments and governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and a growing number of companies. The members of the Global Partnership support landscape restoration-related activities in many parts of the world, through field projects, national consultations, regional workshops and the establishment of national working groups. Several analytical papers and information materials have also been prepared. The Forum secretariat joined the Partnership at its inception and has been an active member of the steering committee for the aforementioned Global Forest Landscape Restoration Implementation Workshop, to be held in Petropolis, Brazil, in April 2005.

II. Policy and programme coordination with United Nations bodies

A. The Economic and Social Council and the 2005 high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly

16. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003, on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, requested that the role and methods of work of each functional commission and relevant subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council be examined during a high-level Assembly meeting in September 2005. Subsequently, the Council, in its resolution 2004/63 of 23 July 2004, requested its subsidiary bodies to contribute, through it, to the high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly, which would also review progress in implementing commitments made in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.[3] As suggested in the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (E/CN.18/2005/__), the Forum may wish to use the outcome of this review as a basis for responding to the request of the Assembly. This will also provide an opportunity to demonstrate to the international community how forests and the Forum can contribute to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. The opportunity to articulate the role of forests in broader development agendas, by directly addressing themes set out in the Council agenda, as is the case this year, may well prove to be a positive one for the Forum and an opportunity worth having in the future.

B. Follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration

17. The United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted by Heads of State and Government in September 2000. It contains a number of global goals and targets related to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, universal primary education, gender equality, health, environmental sustainability and global partnership for development. All of these commitments build on agreements reached by countries during the 1990s in various conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. Forests are highlighted in the Millennium Declaration and the proportion of land area covered by forest constitutes an indicator (No. 25) for monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (No. 7) on ensuring environmental sustainability. The Forum secretariat has participated in several Inter-Agency and Expert Meetings on Millennium Development Goal Indicators and has collaborated, with FAO and other organizations, in the Subgroup on Environment. The Forum will address several of these issues further during the high-level ministerial segment of its fifth session, where it will consider the report of the Secretary-General on the linkages between forests and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (E/CN.18/2005/__).

C. Functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and the regional commissions

18. Interaction with other functional commissions and United Nations bodies, including, in particular, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the regional commissions, has been increasingly important to the Forum and its secretariat, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/270 B. Member States have encouraged the regional commissions to participate in the fifth session of the Forum and to contribute to the review of the regional perspectives on forests, particularly during the Forum's high-level segment.

D. Small island developing States

19. The International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Mauritius in January 2005, reviewed the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States[4] and adopted the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and the Mauritius Declaration. In the Programme of Action, forests are linked to other issues, including agriculture, food security and climate change. The Mauritius Strategy makes specific reference to the intergovernmental forest policy process, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action, affirming in a separate paragraph the strong commitment of small island developing States to sustainable forest management and the work of the Forum. Efforts to develop human and institutional capacity of small island developing States also called for investment in appropriate training in forestry and natural resources product development, with the involvement of non-governmental organizations and community groups of small island developing States. The Forum secretariat had been actively involved in the preparations of the Mauritius Meeting, having attending the Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting held in Trinidad and Tobago in October 2003 (see A/C.2/58/14, annex, for the report thereof), and the Interregional Preparatory Meeting, with ministerial participation, held in Nassau, the Bahamas, in January 2004 (see A/58/782, annex, for the report thereon). The Forum secretariat also participated in the Inter-agency Task Force, chaired by the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Division for Sustainable Development.

E. Activities of the Forum secretariat within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat

20. *General functions as a division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. The Forum secretariat participates actively in the interdepartmental activities of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. When requested, it provides inputs to reports of the Secretary-General and other documentation prepared for the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The secretariat is active in the task forces established to ensure broad-based preparations for the different segments of the substantive session of the Council as well as the panel discussions and round tables organized by the Department of Economic and

Social Affairs. The secretariat contributes every year to the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions of the Council, providing information about policy recommendations from the Forum that are relevant to the themes under consideration by the Council. In order for the Forum to contribute to the broader agenda of the United Nations in a more focused and deliberate manner, it may wish to consider including in its agenda for each session a discussion on the role of forests in relation to the theme or themes for the segments of the Council's substantive session for that particular year; it could then forward any relevant policy recommendations to the Council.

21. *Task Force on Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Development.* The Forum secretariat has actively contributed to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs Task Force on Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Development. The Task Force was established to develop, in collaboration with other United Nations bodies, a strategic framework for integrating socio-economic issues in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It held an Expert Group Meeting in New York on 15 November 2004 as a first step towards developing the framework for the work of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in this area. The Forum secretariat participated collaboratively in this meeting, particularly in the discussion concerning natural resources management, and forests in conflict and peacebuilding.

22. *Role in the response of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to the Indian Ocean tsunami.* In response to the tragedy of the Indian Ocean tsunami that occurred on 26 December 2004, the Forum secretariat contributed to the message of support of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The secretariat also raised awareness about the fact that unsustainable management of forests causes serious and adverse long-term consequences, pointing out the importance of mangrove forests for many tropical coastlines and highlighting, in particular, their protective function in helping to dissipate the energy of incoming waves. As post-tsunami reconstruction moves forward, attention has been directed by the secretariat to opportunities for well-planned restoration of coastal forests and vegetation. Re-establishment with mangrove and other suitable species can offer significant benefits, but needs to form part of a realistic national forest plan that is developed within an integrated framework for management of coastal areas.

III. Regional bodies

23. During its third and fourth sessions, the Forum held regionally focused events to showcase experiences in the implementation of sustainable forest management. At the third session, representatives from the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and the UNEP Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy provided a joint presentation of their cooperative activities on forests in Europe. In addition, the session was informed of actions taken under the auspices of the Central American System for Integration, and its forest component, as well as activities in the Amazon Basin. At the fourth session, challenges and opportunities for sustainable forest management in small island developing States and African countries were addressed. It is expected that the focus of the regional panel at the fifth session will be sustainable forest management in Asia.

24. The Forum secretariat has encouraged closer ties with regional organizations and bodies, and in many of its activities has drawn upon their knowledge and networks to enhance further collaboration on sustainable forest management. For example, the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions have helped extend the global forest policy dialogue to the national level, by bringing together heads of the national forestry agencies, in the respective regions, to discuss policy and technical issues of interest. In most regions, the Regional Forestry Commission meets every two years, reporting on issues of regional significance to the global forest community, through the FAO Conference and through the FAO Committee on Forestry. In 2004, four Regional Forestry Commissions organized specific workshops and in-session seminars on the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action and highlighted national forest programmes as vehicles for implementation. The Forum secretariat has also been engaging with the regional commissions, in particular ECE, which is currently the only commission dealing specifically with forest and timber issues. The secretariat has addressed other regional commissions in respect of forest-related matters within the context of the Millennium Development Goals and other activities, including natural resource use, governance, renewable energy and sustainable development.

25. Workshops at the regional level have provided an effective means to discuss and understand challenges, search for approaches to address common problems, build trust, and develop a basis for cooperative work between countries and civil society. For example, in 2004, the European Forest Institute hosted two workshops on forestry incentives in Europe and on research in the context of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. The Forum secretariat participated in both workshops, providing relevant information on economic aspects of forests and research needs for forest policy development at the global level. Action at the regional level will continue to be important in assisting countries in achieving sustainable forest management. Accordingly, steps have been taken by the secretariat to facilitate better communication with regional partners by working on a regional focal point system so as to ensure broader participation and input. Expanding the scope of representation is also necessary to ensure that geographical balance exists within the Forum. Hence, the secretariat has been seeking to make the process of accreditation more available and useful so as to ensure active involvement in Forum sessions of regional organizations, instruments, partnerships and processes.

IV. International instruments and organizations relevant to the forest sector

A. Coordination with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions

26. Noting the distinct mandates and independent status of each organization working on forest issues, the Forum secretariat plans to organize an inter-agency discussion on cooperation and future actions in respect of forest in April 2005, and has invited the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious

Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and FAO, as Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to participate. The meeting will discuss, among other issues, how better to coordinate activities building on the comparative advantages of the organizations in order to achieve harmonization in the implementation of decisions of their governing bodies. It has been proposed that the meeting also address strategic components on cooperation and coordination and explore areas for joint activities in the future work of the international arrangement on forests.

27. In April 2004, a workshop on "Forests and Forest Ecosystems: Promoting Synergy in the Implementation of the three Rio Conventions" was organized in Viterbo, Italy, by the three above-mentioned secretariats. The merit of the Workshop related directly to the interactions among the focal points of the three Conventions and other participants. The increasing importance of facilitating country-level interactions between focal points of the Conventions and representatives of forest-related institutions, through use of existing policy and planning mechanisms at the national level, such as national focal point agencies, was underlined.

28. *Convention on Biological Diversity*. Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity (decision VI/22 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, annex) is based on national priorities and needs. There is emphasis particularly on the need for the Convention secretariat and parties to the Convention to cooperate with the Forum, with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and with their partners to ensure national-level implementation of common objectives contained in national forest programmes and national biodiversity strategies and action plans. Regional-level cooperation is also encouraged, for example, when incorporating relevant criteria and indicators into the forest work programme and in order to enhance cross-sectoral integration and intersectoral collaboration. The Convention has noted the importance of supporting the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action, in particular those concerning the valuation of forest goods and services, and has stressed the need to harmonize the Convention's work with the proposals for action on traditional forest-related knowledge. The Convention has invited the Forum and the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to provide further views on the preliminary assessment undertaken by its Executive Secretary on the relationship between the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action and the activities of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity, with the objective of capturing synergies, facilitating the implementation of related activities under these two instruments, and avoiding duplication of effort.

29. *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*. At the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to combat Desertification, held in Havana from 25 August to 5 September 2003, it was recommended that countries that were parties to the Convention should adopt and prioritize forest resource assessment techniques for effective analysis of the status of land cover. Parties were called upon to integrate measures to prevent and combat desertification and to mitigate the effects of drought by means of relevant policies and programmes, such as forest management, as well as poverty eradication and sustainable development strategies. In its decision 12/COP.6, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification requested the secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Forum,

the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity to collaborate in order to promote activities with low forest cover countries. A joint approach on forests will be developed, in cooperation with the Tehran Process, among others, in order to strengthen the capacity of low forest cover countries to combat desertification, land degradation and deforestation. GEF, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, Committee on Science and Technology and Global Mechanism, were also invited to give due consideration to the special needs and requirements of low forest cover countries. As the International Year of Deserts and Desertification will be celebrated in 2006, the Forum may wish to liaise more closely with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification process and plan to contribute to the related discussions at future meetings.

30. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. The Forum secretariat attended the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in December 2004. The Conference of the Parties at its tenth session adopted a decision on simplified modalities and procedures for small-scale afforestation and reforestation project activities under the clean development mechanism, and measures to facilitate their implementation. This decision finalized the rules of the clean development mechanism. A second decision related to the use of good practice guidance for land use, land-use change and forestry under article 3, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[5] and completed the guidelines for reporting greenhouse gas inventories. In connection with the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties, meetings of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice were held to address forest-related topics, including harvested wood products. The Convention secretariat also incorporated the land use, land-use change and forestry common reporting format tables and related technical modifications into the Guidelines for the Preparation of National Communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part I: UNFCCC Reporting Guidelines on Annual Inventories. These developments will influence forest-related reporting under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol and need to be considered in light of the work on harmonizing forest-related definitions, as well as the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting.

B. Cooperation with relevant international organizations related to forests

31. *FAO*. Collaboration with FAO, and its support to national forest programmes, provision of global information on forests, and undertakings through its Regional Forestry Commissions, have contributed to the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action as well as to monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management. Through its role in the National Forest Programme Facility, FAO, together with other international partners, has also helped countries better understand and implement internationally agreed actions on forests. The seventeenth session of the Committee on Forestry held in Rome in March 2005, was

preceded by a high-level ministerial meeting that addressed international cooperation on forest fire and commitment to sustainable forest management. Ministers were invited to consider initiating action to develop a global accord for international cooperation on forest fires and approaches to improving national intersectoral cooperation and coordination. The Bureau of the fifth session of the Forum and the secretariat participated in the session, as it offered an opportunity for the Forum at its fifth session to build upon the outcomes of the ministerial meeting.

32. *International Tropical Timber Agreement*. The International Tropical Timber Council, the governing body of ITTO, held its thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh sessions in 2004, both attended by the Forum secretariat. As the current Agreement is scheduled to expire on 31 December 2006, the negotiation process for a successor agreement is currently under way. Two conference sessions under the aegis of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have been held in the period between the fourth and fifth sessions of the Forum. The structure and content of the new Agreement will be of great significance to the further enhancement of cooperation and coordination for efforts towards sustainable forest management.

33. *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*. The Director of the Forum secretariat participated in the UNESCO meeting entitled "Biodiversity: Science and Governance", held in Paris in January 2005, and chaired a workshop on sustainable management of tropical and subtropical forest biodiversity. In addition, the Forum secretariat participated in the meeting of experts of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre held in Nancy, France, in March 2005. The meeting focused on the UNESCO World Heritage Centre forest programme and on actions for the next several years. The secretariat is in the process of establishing closer links with UNESCO and expects that the two bodies will be able to influence positively each other's programmes related to forestry in the future.

34. *World Conservation Union (IUCN)*. The third IUCN World Conservation Congress, held in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 2004, addressed pressing sustainable development challenges around the world and centred around four themes: biodiversity loss and species extinction; ecosystem management; health, poverty and conservation; and markets, business and the environment. A number of forest-related events and workshops were held in conjunction with the Congress by members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. The Forum secretariat participated in the Congress and the other forest-related events. The Congress adopted resolution WCC3.071 on international cooperation on forest management (Congress reference: CGR3.RES055E-Rev.1), in which the Congress requested inter alia, the Director-General of IUCN to ensure the continued participation of IUCN in, and its active role at, the meetings of the Forum and to further the future work and synergies of the Partnership.

35. *International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO)*. The Forum secretariat has been actively involved with IUFRO in exploring how the provision of scientific knowledge and advice can be further enhanced in the future at the international level in order to facilitate informed decision-making and contribute to policy implementation. The Global Forest Information Service (GFIS), a recent initiative, serves as an Internet gateway that provides access to forest data from around the world, and includes browsing and metadata search facilities for users. The provision of information to GFIS builds on agreements with a broad range of

forest-related institutions giving them wider opportunities to disseminate information. In leading this initiative, IUFRO maintains close collaboration with FAO, the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Forum secretariat and other partners. The secretariat also acts as a member of the GFIS Steering Committee. The fully operational service will be presented on the occasion of the Twenty-second IUFRO World Congress to be held in Brisbane, Australia, in August 2005.

36. *World Congress of Agroforestry*. The Forum secretariat participated in the first World Congress of Agroforestry held in Orlando, Florida, from 27 June to 2 July 2004. It was attended by about 700 experts from 82 countries. The theme of the Congress was "Working together for sustainable land-use systems". On 2 July, the Congress adopted the Orlando Declaration, highlighting the contribution of agroforestry systems and technologies in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Congress also called upon the international community, including the Forum, to endorse the role of, and the potential afforded by, agroforestry in accomplishing the targeted objectives and goals set in international commitments and agreements.

37. *Global Wildland Fire Advisory Group*. The Wildland Fire Advisory Group of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction has been working towards enhancing international cooperation and collaboration on preventing and combating forest fires. The members of the Advisory Group represent a number of government forest and forest fire services, United Nations organizations, research institutions, academia and non-governmental organizations. It has a number of regional wildland fire networks covering all regions of the world, and its close link to forests and sustainable forest management warrants closer collaboration with the Forum. The Forum secretariat attended the first meeting of the Advisory Group, held in Freiburg, Germany, on 3 and 4 December 2004.

V. Conclusions

38. **Forests affect, and are directly and indirectly affected by, a considerable number of binding and non-binding instruments, each having a particular focus and mandate that determines its scope in respect of forests. The fact that so many instruments and processes are relevant to forests is due to the cross-sectoral nature of forests. At the global level, it has been recognized that aspects of forest issues are being addressed in multiple areas by various international and regional organizations.**

39. **The Forum and its secretariat have undertaken serious efforts to improve cooperation and coordination at an organizational level. Nevertheless, greater attention needs to be directed to the issue of coordination of international bodies at the global, regional and subregional levels for better management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. Efforts should also focus on policy cooperation and coordination at the intergovernmental level so as to avoid inefficiencies and, particularly, the transmittal of conflicting messages to different bodies. Consideration should also be given to how decisions taken in other sectors and bodies impact forests. Correspondingly, Forum decisions need to be well positioned in the agendas of other bodies, to ensure clear messages at the international level. There is scope to improve**

synergistic approaches and to mobilize available resources, conducive to national-level implementation, demonstrating the benefits and full value of forestry to stakeholders in and outside the forest sector.

40. The Forum is uniquely positioned to further advance the framework of sustainable forest management and to act as a key political voice on forests. It is essential to continue enhancing synergies among partners, particularly among the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and to improve cooperation and policy and programme coordination in and outside the forest sector. The Forum in directing increased political attention to the role of forests, also contributes to the goals as set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

41. The forest sector has been recognized as a potential platform for creating synergies between and with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions, as well as other multilateral environmental agreements. Effective coordination and cooperation among the Conventions, and relevant forest organizations, bodies and processes, are important, in part because they lead to the better utilization of resources and expertise, a lesser likelihood of overlaps or duplication of work, and better communication and dissemination of information, as well as broader political attention. Collaboration between the secretariats should include the regular exchange of information, for example, through the seeking of comments on the preparation of documents where the subject matter is relevant to other secretariats, participation in joint side events and similar activities, and cooperation through country- and organizational-led initiatives. Members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests have also found the Partnership to be a functional means of efficient cooperation. Much of its effectiveness is attributed to its voluntary and informal nature, its manageable size, and, above all, the strong commitment of its members to collaboration.

42. Collaboration between national focal points of the Forum and those of the three United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions is also important in order to foster national-level collaboration, particularly through the use of existing policy and planning mechanisms, such as national forest programmes. Cooperation at the national level has often been underscored as particularly relevant for fostering synergy, because it is at that level that perceptible implementation occurs. At the national level, collaboration and cooperation can make a considerable difference with respect to achieving widespread engagement in the implementation of sustainable forest management. Furthermore, it has been noted that effective coordination at the international level depends upon a coherent approach at the national level that provides consistent messages to international bodies.

43. Within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, there is also scope for dealing with forest issues more coherently and for it to contribute more effectively to discussions on economic and social development in general, as well as on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and development with other Departments of the United Nations Secretariat. As the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is currently developing a strategic plan to address these issues, the Forum and its secretariat (as one of the divisions of the Department

of Economic and Social Affairs) should consider taking the opportunity to exercise a key role in the area of natural resource management.

VI. Points for discussion

44. The Forum may wish to undertake to:

(a) Encourage regional and thematic activities, as part of and prior to Forum sessions, as well as country- and organization-led initiatives, closely involving major groups, by supporting the convening of regionally focused events during Forum sessions, by promoting continuous exchange of experiences, and by refocusing interactive dialogues among experts and practitioners;

(b) Invite the regional commissions, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as well as other existing regional bodies and processes, such as the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions, to consider organizing regional meetings and activities, as necessary and appropriate, in order to contribute to the work of the Forum;

(c) Consider ways to improve the coordination of actions within the United Nations system, and among relevant international and regional bodies, in order to support the implementation of sustainable forest management;

(d) Encourage cross-sectoral coordination, nationally and internationally, between the forest sector and other sectors, so as to identify and reduce impacts on forests from decisions taken outside the forest sector;

(e) Encourage the heads of international organizations to continue supporting the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to help facilitate the implementation of Forum decisions and to make greater use of the Partnership in carrying out joint and collaborative programmes, within their existing mandates;

(f) Promote complementarity among national forest programmes and action plans under the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions to further mainstream sustainable forest management in cross-sectoral policies;

(g) Request the Forum secretariat to continue actively participating in and supporting the Collaborative Partnership on Forests as well as enhancing cooperation with relevant international and regional partnerships, processes and bodies.

Notes

[1] The three United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related Conventions are the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (ibid., vol. 1760, No. 30619), both of which were opened for signature at the Conference, held in Rio de Janeiro, from 3 to 14 June 1992, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (ibid., vol. 1954, No. 33480). The last-mentioned was the outcome of a recommendation made by the Conference

in paragraph 12.40 of Agenda 21 (see *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II), by which the General Assembly was invited to establish at its forty-seventh session, under its aegis, an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of such a convention, with a view to finalizing it by June 1994.

[2] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

[3] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[4] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[5] FCCC/CP/1997/7/Add.1, decision 1/CP.3, annex.

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Review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

By its resolution 2000/35 of 18 October 2000, the Economic and Social Council decided that the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests would be reviewed after five years and that the review should also address the institutional framework of the United Nations Forum on Forests, including its position within the United Nations system.

Prepared in response to Forum resolution 4/4, the present report contains a synthesis of the information provided by member States, by members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and by other relevant organizations in their reports on the implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) and in their responses to a questionnaire based on the specific criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

Reports and/or responses to the questionnaire were received from 46 member States, the European Union and 10 other relevant organizations and forest-related processes. In addition, CPF members submitted a joint report and a joint response to the questionnaire.

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The report consists of two main sections, on the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action (sect. II) and the analysis of responses to the questionnaire on the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (sect. III). In the conclusions (sect. IV), it is suggested that, while the original mandate assigned to the international arrangement on forests remains valid, there is a need to strengthen the arrangement. Put forward in section V for discussion by the Forum are suggestions for strengthening the arrangement through changes in working methods, bearing in mind that further options for strengthening are considered in other reports submitted by the Secretary-General to the Forum at its present session.

I. Background

1. By its resolution 2000/35 of 18 October 2000, the Economic and Social Council established the international arrangement on forests. The main objective of the arrangement was to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment in that regard. In order to achieve that objective and to carry out the six principal functions specified in its resolution, the Council decided to establish the United Nations Forum on Forests as one of its subsidiary bodies, and to invite heads of relevant organizations, institutions and instruments to form a Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)[1] to support the work of the Forum. The Council also decided that the international arrangement on forests should facilitate and promote the implementation of the proposals for action put forward by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), that the arrangement would be reviewed after five years and that the review would also address the institutional framework of the Forum, including its position within the United Nations system.

2. At its second session, the Forum, recalling the above-mentioned resolution of the Council, decided, by its resolution 2/3,[2] that the review of the international arrangement on forests would be carried out in the context of the six principal functions of the arrangement, and identified 21 specific criteria for the assessment of its effectiveness. At its fourth session, the Forum, recalling those previous resolutions, agreed, by its resolution 4/4,[3] on a process to facilitate the review. In response, the secretariat of the Forum invited member States, CPF members and other relevant organizations and forest-related processes to submit, on a voluntary basis, reports on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and to respond, again on a voluntary basis, to a questionnaire on each of the specific criteria. The Forum secretariat also made available guidelines and a suggested format for the national reports, and a paper providing baseline information relevant to the specific criteria.

3. Reports and/or responses to the questionnaire were received from 46 member States. A number requested that the reports submitted by them to the Forum at previous sessions be regarded as constituting a report to the Forum at its fifth session. Responses to the questionnaire were also received from the European Union, from five major groups and from one forest-related process. In addition, CPF members submitted a joint report and a joint response to the questionnaire, and four CPF members submitted individual reports. The present synthesis report is based on the information provided in the reports and responses received.[4] The present report takes no account of information relating to countries that did not submit reports or questionnaires.

Number of countries which submitted reports and/or responses to the questionnaire, by region

	Africa	*Asia*	*Eastern Europe*	*Latin America and the Caribbean*	*Western Europe and other*
Number of countries	10	6	9	4	17

4. The General Assembly, by paragraph 46 of its resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003, requested that each functional commission of the Economic and Social Council report to the Council no later than 2005 on the outcome of an examination of its methods of work, in order better to pursue the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. In responding to this request, the Forum may wish to draw upon the present review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

II. Implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/ Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action

A. Introduction

5. Some 270 proposals for action were identified by IPF and IFF. In its multi-year programme of work and its plan of action,[5] the Forum agreed to cluster the proposals according to 16 thematic elements, and to focus on particular elements at its second, third and fourth sessions.[6] These 16 elements form the structure of the analysis in the present section, which is based on information drawn from reports and, where relevant, responses to the questionnaire.

B. Progress made in implementing the proposals for action, according to the 16 thematic elements

1. Formulation and implementation of national forest programmes

6. Most countries give details of their national forest programmes (or similar frameworks) and explain that the IPF/IFF proposals were taken into account during their development. The benefits of such programmes, in terms of providing a focus for forest policy development and implementation, are widely recognized. In some countries, the programmes are developed at the subnational level because significant forest policy responsibilities have been decentralized. Important current challenges include: (a) the need to ensure cross-sectoral integration with other policies so that national forest programme priorities are reflected in broader national development plans, such as the poverty reduction strategy papers; (b) the need to gain high-level political support for national forest programmes; and (c) the need, especially in developing countries, to secure adequate financing for the implementation of the programmes. It is clear from the reports that national forest programmes (or similar frameworks) have helped to bring stakeholders together in developing a common vision for forests and in identifying priorities for implementation. CPF members explain that they have facilitated national forest programmes in a number of important ways, including through the National Forest Programme Facility and the Programme on Forests (PROFOR).[7]

2. Promoting public participation

7. Action has been taken to promote stakeholder participation at various levels: in policymaking; through the preparation of codes of practice; through local consultation on forest management decisions in respect of publicly owned forests; and through mechanisms, such as certification, that have increased consultations on the management of privately owned forests. It is recognized in many reports that

further efforts are now needed to assist stakeholder groups that have a limited capacity or opportunity to participate. Reference is made to the valuable exchange of experience at the workshop on decentralization in forestry, held in Interlaken, Switzerland, from 27 to 30 April 2004. Participatory processes have also been promoted by CPF members in many parts of the world.

3. Combating deforestation and forest degradation

8. Despite some positive trends, there remains a need for continued action to combat deforestation and forest degradation in many countries. Underlying causes of deforestation are complex and varied. For example, pressures to use forest land for agriculture and grazing and to exploit forest products at an unsustainable level may be rooted in poverty and in some places, owners may face pressures to sell forest land for building development. Measures taken to combat deforestation and forest degradation include the development and implementation of national forest programmes (and similar frameworks), management guidelines, financial encouragement, removal of perverse incentives for deforestation and public information campaigns. Among CPF members, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) is implementing Objective 2000, which provides support to countries with a view to their achieving exports of tropical timber and timber products from sustainably managed forests, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is developing best practice guidelines, where appropriate in collaboration with ITTO. In order to sustain progress in combating deforestation and forest degradation, further efforts are needed to address underlying causes, to improve cross-sectoral coordination with other sectors (such as agriculture) and to strengthen professional and institutional capacity, in particular for law enforcement.

4. Traditional forest-related knowledge

9. Countries provide details of inventories that record traditional knowledge, adding that much (potentially very beneficial) knowledge is still being captured. Some reports provide an explanation of how this knowledge has become incorporated into contemporary scientific approaches to sustainable forest management. In relation to intellectual property rights and/or other protection regimes for traditional forest-related knowledge, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits, stressed in several reports is the importance of the developments taking place within the frameworks of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the World Intellectual Property Organization Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore.

5. Forest-related scientific knowledge

10. The dissemination of scientific knowledge is done by such means as electronic publishing, as well as traditional methods, such as meetings, professional education and training, and the use of printed material. Highlighted in the reports is the continuing importance of collaboration and international cooperation, both to prevent duplication and friction among research institutions and to bring together complementary sources of funding for integrated projects. Several countries, in particular some which face the most difficult challenges in relation to their forests, stress that they lack research capacity. Reports demonstrate a positive approach towards encouraging interaction between the scientific research and policy

processes. They emphasize the importance of ensuring that research is policy-relevant and recognize the complex relationship between scientific output and decision-making. CPF itself has significant research capability, in members such as the Center for International Forestry Research, the World Agroforestry Centre and the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations.

6. Forest health and productivity

11. Action is being taken to monitor the impact of air pollution where it remains a threat to forest health and productivity. Countries are also addressing the serious implications for forest health and productivity of invasive species, pests and diseases; action taken includes international collaboration to reduce the risk of infestations spreading through trade and other transboundary movements. In addition, countries are sharing experience on how best to prevent and fight fires. In its report, CPF states that a global information system is monitoring the impact of insect pest and disease outbreaks on forests.

7. Criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management

12. Most countries report that they are developing or implementing national criteria and indicators within the framework of regional processes. Criteria and indicators are regarded as an important tool for monitoring progress towards sustainable forest management. Their strength lies in their objectivity (which can assist those responsible for making political judgements) and the gradual convergence towards an internationally agreed framework for criteria and indicators. Nearly 150 countries, representing 85 per cent of the world's forests, are participating in the nine regional processes. CPF members have played an active role in supporting these processes and the development of criteria and indicators within countries. There is now a need for the further development of measurable indicators, while taking account of resource constraints and recognizing the technical difficulties of collecting some of the desirable data.

8. Economic, social and cultural aspects of forests

13. The contribution of forest goods and services is often much greater than that revealed by official statistics. This is partly because many important outputs (such as fuelwood) form part of the unrecorded, informal economy, and partly because there are non-market outputs (such as many environmental benefits) that can only be valued indirectly. There is also a considerable variation among countries in regard to the availability and quality of market information on forest products: a number of the least developed countries state that their resources for gathering such data are inadequate. Many countries report action to improve the use of economic and policy instruments to promote sustainable forest management. Where there are extensive areas of public forest, the focus has been on setting concession rents and royalty rates to reflect market prices. Some countries contribute to the costs that private owners incur when managing their forests to produce non-market output (such as nature conservation and recreation) and/or offer incentives to promote afforestation. Explained in a number of reports is how taxation measures are used to encourage sustainable forest management. While the appropriate use of such economic and policy instruments is important, countries also recognize the often crucial impact on forests of other policies and economic pressures (e.g., those relating to trade, agriculture, energy and development of human settlements). Fundamental

challenges for the future are to ensure that society places a proper value on forests (reflecting their non-market, public good outputs, as well as financial returns) and that wider national development policies take full account of the potential contribution of forests.

14. Action to promote the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the utilization of forest genetic resources has generally been taken within the framework of guidelines under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Many of the reports provide examples of policies and initiatives aimed at strengthening the role of women, and a number refer to the development of women's forestry organizations. Notable developments in the integration of local and indigenous communities have included the establishment of community-based management and ownership initiatives that are intended to generate income for local use and promote local responsibility for sustainable forest management. The importance of forest resources for the daily livelihoods of many people, and the need to safeguard rights of customary use, is also stressed in several reports.

9. Forest conservation and protection of unique types of forests and fragile ecosystems

15. Many countries have significant areas of ecologically important forest under some form of legal protection. Action has been taken to secure the effective conservation of these areas, for example, by addressing the potential conflicts that may arise in instances in which land is also important to the livelihoods of local populations. This has included consultation, at all stages of the process, on designation and on management plans, the offering of financial incentives and the use of partnership mechanisms. In national forest programmes and related biodiversity strategies increasing emphasis is given to conservation and the management of environmentally critical areas, although in several reports submitted by the least developed countries, the problem of resource constraints is stressed. ITTO is currently implementing 10 transboundary conservation projects that cover 10.3 million hectares of tropical forests, and ITTO and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) jointly organized an international workshop on increasing the effectiveness of transboundary conservation areas in tropical forests, held in Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand, in 2003.

10. Monitoring, assessment and reporting, and concepts, terminology and definitions

16. Many countries have well-established forest inventory systems that are being further developed to collect a wider range of data that relate not only to trees and wood production but also to ecological condition, biological diversity, tree health, fires, and use for recreation and non-timber forest products. While a number of developing countries report difficulties with monitoring, assessment and reporting, largely owing to a lack of expertise and funding, in its joint report CPF refers to the efforts of its members to help build capacity for national forest assessments. The joint CPF initiative on streamlining forest-related reporting aims to relieve the burden placed on countries by international bodies for forest-related reports. In addition, CPF is undertaking a joint initiative on the harmonization of forest-related terms and definitions.

11. Rehabilitation and conservation strategies for countries with low forest cover

17. Action taken in regard to rehabilitation and conservation includes afforestation programmes and the implementation of detailed operational guidelines aimed at conserving the protective functions of forests in areas of low forest cover. Further progress will depend upon the priority that is given to forest restoration in these countries. The Tehran process remains important: the joint CPF report explains that it provides a framework for cooperation and collaboration among its members in regard to low forest cover countries. Rehabilitation and conservation is being taken forward in certain regions by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and through the operational programme of the Global Environment Facility on sustainable land management.

12. Rehabilitation and restoration of degraded lands, and the promotion of natural and planted forests

18. Action taken by concerned countries in regard to degraded lands and the promotion of natural and planted forests includes forest restoration through natural regeneration, the establishment of plantations and the implementation of agroforestry projects. There are many examples of the successful establishment of plantations, which can take the pressure off natural forests without causing undesirable social or environmental side effects, provided that suitable land and the necessary financial and human resources for their effective establishment and maintenance are available. Innovative approaches have included working closely with communities to develop solutions, such as agroforestry systems, which can help meet future needs for wood and non-timber forest products within the context of broader livelihood requirements.

13. Maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs

19. National forest programmes have become a vital tool for promoting dialogue with other sectors and increasing understanding of the benefits that forests bring. Highlighted in several reports is the importance of such programmes in developing national strategies that reflect the full range of forest values, including their contribution to the livelihoods of forest-dependent people. Emphasis is given to the role of cross-sectoral integration and the need for reliable data. While many countries have well-developed methods for forecasting long-term supply and demand trends, others are yet to carry out such assessments. In general, the existing mechanisms for assessing long-term trends are most sophisticated in those countries in which the problems are least acute. Noted in the reports is the need to take account of external factors, such as changing patterns of demand and the impact of substitutes, when assessing future needs. In addition, highlighted in some reports is the proactive work undertaken through wood promotion campaigns to stimulate demand for wood as a sustainably produced, renewable, raw material.

14. Financial resources

20. Members of CPF, such as FAO, ITTO and the World Bank, continue to mobilize financial resources for the sustainable management of forests. Information on sources of finance has been made available through the online *CPF Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management*. Several countries recognize the

need to provide an investment climate that is conducive to attracting funds, and some report on innovative approaches to financing sustainable forest management, including that of securing access to funds from the voluntary sector. A number of countries identify other responses to financial challenges, for example, through efficiency improvements and adopting low-input silviculture. In some reports, however, it is noted that poor financial returns from forests can threaten the capacity to manage them in regard to other benefits. It is clear from many reports that financing of sustainable forest management and payment for non-market output remain critical factors for achieving the successful implementation of IPF/IFF proposals. Furthermore, it is noted that, in future, access to official development assistance is likely to depend increasingly upon the identification of forest-related programmes as national priorities within broader national development plans.

15. International trade and sustainable forest management

21. Action taken to combat illegal trade has included the initiatives undertaken within the framework of the various forest law enforcement and governance processes. Recognized in the reports is the important role of the World Trade Organization and the continuing need for multilateral efforts to make trade and environment mutually supportive. Forest certification can help exporters to demonstrate that their forest products derive from sustainably managed sources and many countries report considerable progress in that regard, often associated with the development of national certification standards. Some countries have published guidelines on the public procurement of timber from sustainably managed forests.

16. International cooperation in capacity-building, and access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies to support sustainable forest management

22. Numerous examples of bilateral and multilateral cooperation are cited in the reports, which also note the significant role of non-governmental organizations and of the partnerships established following the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In addition, it is made clear that, in particular in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, there is a continuing priority need to address issues of capacity-building and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies. While some donor countries still offer specific support for forest-related projects (sometimes within the context of the IPF/IFF proposals), there is a general move away from this approach. Increasingly, support for forest-related projects is likely to depend upon a clear demonstration of their benefits in terms of achieving broader development goals and contributing to objectives identified in poverty reduction strategy papers and similar national programmes.

III. Effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests: analysis of responses to the questionnaire

A. Overall assessment

23. In the present section, consideration is given to the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in terms of its six principal functions and the 21 specific criteria that the Forum adopted, by resolution 2/3, for assessing the effectiveness of the arrangement. It draws upon the 22 responses received to the

questionnaire: 14 from countries, 1 from the European Union, a joint response from CPF, 5 from major groups and 1 from a forest-related process. The questionnaire invited an overall assessment of effectiveness in relation to each specific criterion; 17 of the 22 respondents (including the European Union) took the opportunity to provide an overall assessment for 1 or more criteria. These responses reveal that, while there is a range of views and it is difficult to draw firm conclusions given the relatively small number of responses, the most common assessment is "moderate". Details of the overall assessments for each specific criterion are given in the annex to the present report.

B. Remarks

24. The questionnaire invited remarks in relation to each specific criterion, an assessment according to the various activities[7] of the international arrangement[8] and suggestions for quantifiable benchmarks. Summarized below are the main points made under "remarks". An assessment according to activity is also noted where there appears to be a common view, among at least 6 respondents, that the effectiveness of a particular activity is other than "moderate". Ten respondents suggested benchmarks in respect of 1 or more of the specific criteria; these suggestions are recorded in the analytical study available on the Forum web site.

(a) Principal function: Implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

Specific criterion (i): The extent to which countries, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other actors have made progress in implementing the relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action

25. Countries explain that progress made in implementing IPF/IFF proposals for action is recorded in their national reports; section II above contains further details in that regard. CPF members state that they have made good progress in implementing the IPF/IFF proposals directed to them, and in assisting countries with their implementation. One major group points out that national forest programmes are a constructive tool for translating relevant IPF/IFF proposals to the national level. Other major groups consider that it is difficult to assess the contribution of the Forum to the progress made, and that progress is only partly reflected in official output.

Specific criterion (ii): The extent to which countries have developed and started to implement national forest programmes or equivalent processes

26. A large number of countries have national forest programmes or equivalent processes that take account of relevant IPF/IFF proposals. It is suggested that the existence of the international arrangement has contributed to this successful outcome by generating political commitment to national forest programmes. While financial constraints and lack of capacity have affected implementation in some reporting countries, the benefits of the support provided by CPF members is acknowledged. CPF members state that, increasingly, national forest programmes are seen as an effective tool for cross-sectoral and participatory policy-making and for translating international forest-related commitments into practice. Action by CPF members has included the National Forest Programme Facility, the work of PROFOR and capacity-building. A comment from one of the major groups is that

few national forest programmes take into account social aspects or aspects relating to trade, consumption and production patterns.

Specific criterion (iii): The extent to which participation of stakeholders in those programmes and processes has been enhanced

27. Countries report a positive trend towards increasing stakeholder participation, stimulated both by the emphasis in the IPF/IFF proposals and by more general national policies that promote such participation. The number of stakeholder groups has increased over time owing to an increased focus on the multiple values of forests. CPF members note that the general trend towards enhanced civil society participation in policy processes has gained momentum, although there are still variations in the extent to which all stakeholders are included. One major group refers to a recent review that revealed minimal participation by rightsholders, indigenous peoples, local communities and civil society organizations in a number of countries; others refer to the near-absence of women in policy-making roles in many countries and to the need for greater involvement of children or young people.

28. Five countries consider contacts made at Forum sessions to have been of limited effectiveness in respect of this criterion and one country considers them to have had no effect.

Specific criterion (iv): The extent to which the international arrangement on forests has facilitated and promoted countries' implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, focusing on the means of implementation (finance, transfer of environmentally sound technologies and capacity-building) as well as the relevant common items

29. Countries identify finance, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and capacity-building as a priority area for further action. While the work of the ad hoc expert group of the Forum and other relevant initiatives are recognized, the overall assessment of many is that their effectiveness has been limited in respect of this criterion. It is noted, however, that the international process has had some indirect effects on resource allocation: for example, financing by the European Union of forest-related rural development measures requires that the proposed action be consistent with national forest programmes. CPF members state that the Forum has facilitated dialogue on this subject and note that capacity-building is an integral and extensive part of their work. The importance of this issue, and the need for further action, is also highlighted by major groups.

Specific criterion (v): The extent to which countries have made progress in assessing the IPF/IFF proposals for action in order to determine their relevance in their national context

30. Some countries have commissioned systematic formal studies, while others explain that they have relied on more informal assessments (often undertaken within the context of preparing reports for the Forum and/or as part of the national forest programme process). While there is no agreed methodology for such assessments, some countries refer to the helpful framework provided as a result of a joint initiative between Australia and PROFOR. CPF members have also taken action to make the IPF/IFF proposals more readily understandable in national and regional

contexts. Major groups suggest that more effort is needed to communicate the outcomes of the international forest dialogue.

(b) Principal function: Forum for continued policy development and dialogue

Specific criterion (i): The extent to which the international arrangement on forests, including, inter alia, Forum sessions, intersessional work and the multi-stakeholder dialogue, and the related work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its members, as well as country- and organization-led initiatives, have enhanced forest policy development and dialogue

31. Several countries state that the global process has enhanced policy development and dialogue at the international level, and that it has also contributed to regional collaboration and helped to provide a conceptual framework for implementation at the national level. In addition, country-led initiatives have been valuable in moving beyond the implementation of existing commitments to promote dialogue on emerging issues. For the future, there is a need to involve those working on forest policy at the national level, including stakeholders, more fully in the work of the Forum. Some note that it is difficult to establish a direct link between the international arrangement and forest policy development, and suggest that a legally binding agreement would be more effective. CPF members note that country-led and organization-led initiatives have provided significant expert input and clarification to many complex issues. Major groups note that the work of the Forum has enhanced forest policy development, which has expanded well beyond traditional forestry policy issues, and that new ideas introduced at the Forum can be quickly transmitted to countries. There has been regular dialogue on such issues as gender-sensitive forestry development. It is suggested, however, that the dialogue should focus more clearly on implementation, and that more attention should be paid to critical social and rights issues.

Specific criterion (ii): The extent to which the international arrangement on forests has worked in a transparent and participatory manner, including through the involvement of major groups

32. Countries welcome the greater participation of major groups and the support that they have received from the secretariat. They also note that the Forum web site is good, and contributes to the participatory process. On the other hand, it is considered that accreditation to the Economic and Social Council remains a constraint. In addition, further work is required to promote effective dialogue in plenary sessions and to provide opportunities for participation by a wider range of stakeholders. CPF members state that the multi-stakeholder dialogue at sessions of the Forum and the participation of civil society in intersessional activities have been beneficial. The informal CPF Network has also provided a useful platform for engaging and informing stakeholders. Major groups also refer to the institutional constraints and argue that they should be more closely involved in key discussions leading to decisions.

33. Seven respondents (five countries, the European Union and one major group) consider ad hoc expert groups to have been of limited effectiveness in respect of this criterion.

Specific criterion (iii): The extent to which the Collaborative Partnership on Forests members have responded to the guidance of the Forum

34. Countries confirm that CPF members are addressing priority issues identified by the Forum, but point out that its members are constrained by the mandates given by their governing bodies and the limited resources available for collaborative action. In the future, more consistent political guidance is needed to make full use of the potential of CPF. CPF members also note that the Partnership is made up of individual members, each with its own mandate, priorities and limited budget. CPF has encouraged Governments to send consistent messages. CPF members have or are in the process of implementing most invitations extended by the Forum, and details are provided in CPF progress reports. One major group commented on the usefulness of the CPF web site for those with access to computers.

Specific criterion (iv): The extent to which progress has been made in reaching a common understanding of forest-related concepts, terminology and definitions

35. Countries state that particular progress has been made in regard to criteria and indicators, with the Forum, at its fourth session, acknowledging 7 thematic elements of sustainable forest management. Appreciation is expressed for initiatives taken by CPF members to organize expert meetings, but it is considered that further discussions are needed on some issues relating to concepts, terminology and definitions: examples include the forest-related definitions used by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and clarification of how the ecosystem approach relates to sustainable forest management. CPF members confirm that their technical work has gone a long way towards fostering a common understanding of forest-related concepts, terms and definitions, but that further work is needed in some areas. Major groups also note that progress has been made, but suggest that further clarification of social aspects is needed.

(c) Principal function: Cooperation and policy and programme coordination

Specific criterion (i): The extent to which partnerships relevant to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action have been advanced

36. Countries note the progress made by regional partnerships and the benefits that their dynamism has brought to national policy development. CPF is recognized as an important partnership. There are also several major forest-related partnerships that originate from other processes, such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development. CPF members stress the value of their engagement in a wide range of partnerships for the implementation of international commitments and agreements. One major group highlights the initiative led by indigenous peoples concerning traditional forest-related knowledge as an example of a partnership resulting from the Forum; another suggests that a new partnership could be formed to raise the profile of international forest politics in higher education.

Specific criterion (ii): The extent to which the international arrangement on forests has facilitated and promoted coordination and cooperation among other forest-related organizations, instruments and processes

37. Countries state that the Forum has increased the visibility of forest-related issues at the international level, and that CPF has played a key role in promoting

coordination and cooperation. For the future, the definition of global goals could help provide more direction. It is noted that coordination and cooperation would be strengthened if there were a legally binding agreement on forests. CPF members note that the Partnership has embarked on a number of joint initiatives and other collaborative activities; such activities have also helped to foster synergies and trust among CPF members. Major groups stress the value of the multi-stakeholder dialogue in promoting cooperation and consensus.

(d) **Principal function: International cooperation**

Specific criterion (i): The extent to which the international community, including bilateral and multilateral donors and organizations, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and international and regional processes, have facilitated the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, inter alia, through the provision of financial, technical and scientific resources and capacity-building

38. Countries point out that a number of donor countries have supported national forest programme processes and other programmes that implement IPF/IFF proposals through bilateral or multilateral cooperation. There is, however, a need to emphasize the linkages between national forest programmes and the broader planning processes which determine overall priorities for development cooperation. It is noted that, while the international arrangement has no implementation mechanism, the provision of financial, technical and scientific resources and capacity-building is critical for progress to be made towards achieving the goal of sustainable forest management. CPF members refer to the direct technical assistance and/or scientific advice that they provide.

Specific criterion (ii): The extent to which the international arrangement on forests has promoted efforts by the international community to facilitate the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action through, in particular, North-South cooperation and public-private partnerships, as well as through South-South and North-North cooperation

39. Countries state that the National Forest Programme Facility aims to foster South-South cooperation and that regional intersessional activities are necessary given the differing conditions among regions. Reference is also made to the important role of the private sector and civil society. CPF members state that the international arrangement has supported many efforts to implement sustainable forest management, but note that increasing calls from the Forum for further action are overwhelming implementing agencies at all levels, especially in developing countries.

(e) **Principal function: Monitoring and assessing progress through reporting**

Specific criterion (i): The extent to which countries, regions, organizations and processes respond to the call from Forum and Collaborative Partnership on Forests members for voluntary reports, with a focus on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action

40. Countries note that many countries have not provided voluntary national reports. The number of reports has, however, increased, and the reports provide a

useful documentary account of the progress made in implementing IPF/IFF proposals. It is suggested that more countries would submit reports if the reporting framework were simplified, and greater use were made of them. CPF members refer to the annual progress reports that they provide through the CPF Framework and to their work on streamlining forest-related reporting. Major groups note that some forested countries have not submitted voluntary reports and suggest that reports should focus on obstacles to effective implementation.

41. Five respondents (four countries and one major group) consider contacts made at Forum sessions to have been of limited effectiveness in respect of this criterion, and one country considers them to have had no effect.

Specific criterion (ii): The extent to which trends, lessons learned, emerging issues and actions are identified and become apparent through those voluntary reports

42. Some countries suggest that emerging issues may be identified more readily in other ways, for example, by research organizations or through discussion by think tanks. CPF members state that country reports are increasingly describing trends and lessons learned. While one major group states that reports provide useful geographically specific information, another states that few reports cover trends, lessons learned and emerging issues.

Specific criterion (iii): The extent to which major groups have been encouraged to participate in developing voluntary reports

43. Although some countries have invited major groups to comment on national reports, many state that effectiveness has been limited in respect of this criterion. In some countries, the process of stakeholder dialogue is relatively new and still evolving. CPF members encourage major groups to participate in voluntary national reporting. One major group states that fewer than one half of the reports submitted were developed in consultation with stakeholders and that, even when consulted, the views of stakeholders are not always reflected in the final report. In particular, there is a need for greater involvement of indigenous peoples.

Specific criterion (iv): The extent to which Collaborative Partnership on Forests members have worked to strengthen countries' abilities to monitor, assess and report progress in the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

44. Countries note that the work carried out by the CPF task force on streamlining forest-related reporting is promising. CPF members highlight their support for country-led and organization-led initiatives on monitoring, assessment and reporting. Capacity-building for the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on sustainable forest management is a key component of the work of FAO and ITTO.

Specific criterion (v): The extent to which Forum sessions provide opportunities to voluntarily report progress and lessons learned

45. Countries note that opportunities are provided through discussions of the themes of the Forum sessions, multi-stakeholder dialogues, panel discussions and side events, but there should be a more interactive discussion held during plenary sessions and a greater involvement of those actively engaged in implementation at

the national level. CPF members comment that dialogue can be particularly effective and lead to innovative solutions when held by small groups and/or at the regional or subregional level. One major group states that Forum sessions have provided the opportunity to present the perspectives of women and initiatives that have positive outcomes for women.

Specific criterion (vi): The extent to which countries make progress in monitoring, assessment and reporting through, inter alia, applying criteria and indicator processes or similar tools in their efforts to achieve sustainable forest management

46. Countries state that the development of criteria and indicators (and the identification of 7 common thematic elements at the global level) is a successful aspect of the international arrangement. It is considered that the next challenge is to apply criteria and indicators in a systematic way at the national level. CPF members are working to broaden understanding of criteria and indicators and to encourage their use as a monitoring and reporting tool in national forest programmes and other frameworks, such as those relating to biodiversity.

(f) **Principal function: Strengthening political commitment**

Specific criterion (i): The extent to which high-level engagement furthers political commitment to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action by countries

47. Countries state that high-level engagement helps to increase commitment to and awareness of the IPF/IFF proposals and has been a key element in implementation at the national level. It is suggested that effective political engagement will benefit from messages simpler than those contained in the IPF/IFF proposals and that tangible goals will help to raise political commitment and improve communication. The need to underline the importance of a cross-sectoral approach to forestry is also stressed. Some point out, however, that deforestation and forest degradation continue to occur and that an effective legally binding agreement will improve international governance of forests. CPF members state that strengthened high-level political commitment will support the efforts of countries. One major group links limited progress to inadequate political commitment. Another states that, through their participation at Forum sessions, some Governments have pledged action to further the involvement of women in forest-related activities and organizations.

Specific criterion (ii): The extent to which the international arrangement on forests succeeds in enhancing the positioning of forests on the international agenda

48. Countries point out that, without the international arrangement, there would be no international body dealing with forest issues in an encompassing way at the global level. Specific reference is made to the ministerial message to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.[9] Some suggest, however, that success has been limited and that there is a perception that legally binding conventions have greater weight. CPF members state that, while forest-related issues are on the international agenda, there are also many other pressing concerns; there is a need to reaffirm commitment to sustainable forest management, build stronger linkages

between forests and internationally agreed development goals and strengthen the international arrangement. One major group states that the issue of forests is lower on the political agenda than it was 5 or 10 years ago. Another states that the success of the international arrangement depends upon its success in relating forests to wider social and political issues.

IV. Conclusions

49. Reports and/or responses to the questionnaire were received from 46 countries, from the European Union, from 10 other relevant organizations and forest-related processes and, jointly, from CPF members. While care must be taken to recognize this limited sample when drawing conclusions, the reports nevertheless provide valuable information on a cross-section of experience relating to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. They suggest that greatest progress has been made in relation to the development and implementation of national forest programmes, or similar frameworks; in extending stakeholder participation; and in the development of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. Highlighted in the reports are areas in which there is scope for further effort to be made. It is clear that, in many parts of the world, there are still serious challenges to be met, in particular in terms of combating deforestation and addressing the problems associated with illegal forest activities. Moreover, the countries that struggle most to secure adequate means of implementation are often those which face the severest challenges in pursuing sustainable forest management, with a complex interaction of difficult social, economic and environmental factors. There is also a need to recognize the often crucial impact on forests of other policies and economic pressures (e.g., those relating to trade, agriculture, energy and development of human settlements). A fundamental challenge for the future is to ensure that society places a proper value on forests, reflecting their non-market, public good outputs, as well as financial returns. Other priorities identified in the reports include the need to develop effective institutional frameworks, with good governance; to safeguard the rights of people whose daily livelihoods depend upon forests; and to establish stronger cross-sectoral links with other areas of national policy processes, such as poverty reduction strategy papers.

50. The responses to the questionnaire suggest that the international arrangement has done a good deal of useful work, against a background of many competing priorities on the international agenda, but that the full potential of the international arrangement on forests is yet to be realized. Views are also expressed about the benefit of a legally binding instrument, in terms of raising the status of forest-related issues on the international agenda.

51. The review suggests that the original mandate of the international arrangement remains valid, but that there is a need to strengthen the arrangement. Recurrent themes in the reports and the responses to the questionnaire include the need to:

(a) Secure political commitment. To achieve this, it must be clear to decision makers, and to the people they represent, why sustainable forest

management is relevant to the broader global agenda (including the agenda set out in the Millennium Declaration);

(b) Strengthen the horizontal cross-sectoral linkages between the forest sector and other sectors at the global, regional, national and local levels. This will require: analysis and networking to develop linkages between forest policies and wider social, economic and environmental policies; looking ahead to identify and examine emerging issues; and making better use of the position of the United Nations Forum on Forests to contribute to debates taking place in other international forums;

(c) Strengthen the vertical linkages between forest policy development and dialogue at the global, regional, national and local levels. This will help in the identification of emerging issues and also help to ensure a more rapid transfer of knowledge and experience. Well-thought-out country-led initiatives and regional meetings can be particularly valuable in this respect;

(d) Create a stronger enabling environment for the implementation of forest policies. This depends on securing political commitment and requires that more emphasis be placed on the means of implementation (finance, transfer of environmentally sound technologies and capacity-building);

(e) Build upon the potential of CPF. The Partnership is widely recognized for its important role in promoting coordination and cooperation in support of sustainable forest management among a large number of forest-related international organizations and processes;

(f) Improve monitoring, assessment and reporting through processes that are perceived as worthwhile and relevant to the needs of countries. Criteria and indicators (and the 7 thematic elements of sustainable forest management) can provide a sound framework, provided that countries have the capacity to collate the necessary information.

52. These conclusions do not point to a need to change the institutional status of the Forum as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council with universal membership, or to make any dramatic changes to the objective, purpose and functions of the international arrangement, as set out in Council resolution 2000/35. Such changes could be time-consuming, without offering significant benefits. On the other hand, the international arrangement on forests is still evolving and the review suggests that its effectiveness and efficiency would be significantly enhanced by making changes in its working methods. Furthermore, the review has indicated that there is a need to consider further options for strengthening the arrangement — including the consideration of financing of sustainable forest management — that go beyond changes to working methods.

53. Further options for strengthening the arrangement and its mandate for the future are considered in the reports of the Secretary-General on the review of progress and consideration of future actions and on the consideration of the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests. Meanwhile, possible changes in working methods, for consideration by the Forum, might include the following:

(a) **Secure political commitment by conveying a simpler message about the relevance of sustainable forest management to the broader global agenda, possibly by including a global goal, and by ensuring greater continuity in the work of the Forum by making provision for the re-election of Bureau members for a second or third year;**

(b) **Strengthen horizontal cross-sectoral linkages by developing closer working relationships with other instruments, conventions and processes whose decisions have an impact on the world's forests, and by scheduling the Forum's consideration of major themes in a way that allows the outcomes of the discussions to contribute effectively to the work of other bodies, such as the Economic and Social Council;**

(c) **Strengthen vertical linkages between forest policy development and dialogue at the global, regional, national and local levels by reviewing the scheduling and cycle of meetings and perhaps by holding regional and global thematic meetings on major forest-related issues in alternate years;**

(d) **Create a stronger enabling environment for the implementation of forest policies by establishing new financial mechanisms for financing sustainable forest management activities and projects;**

(e) **Build upon the potential of CPF by inviting Governments to send consistent messages through the governing bodies of CPF members about the importance of collaborative work to promote sustainable forest management;**

(f) **Improve monitoring, assessment and reporting by continuing work on streamlining and capacity-building and by developing a clearer articulation of how the framework provided by the 7 thematic elements acknowledged at the fourth session of the Forum can help in assessing the progress made towards sustainable forest management;**

(g) **Strengthen the secretariat to reflect decisions about future working methods and the consideration of future actions, so that it can continue to provide efficient and effective service to the Forum;**

(h) **Following the consideration of the above-mentioned reports of the Secretary-General, there may also be a need to consider holding an organizational session prior to the sixth session of the Forum in order to agree on the scheduling of work and to develop a new multi-year programme of work for the strengthened international arrangement on forests.**

V. Points for discussion

54. **Bearing in mind the other discussions that will be held during its fifth session, on the review of progress and consideration of future actions and on the consideration of the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests, the United Nations Forum on Forests may wish to:**

(a) **Receive additional input from member States and other relevant organizations on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and on the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests;**

(b) Recommend, in the light of its review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, that the current institutional status of the Forum as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council with universal membership be maintained, and to reaffirm that the objective, purpose and functions of the international arrangement, as set out in Council resolution 2000/35, remain valid;

(c) Consider the changes to its working methods outlined in paragraph 53 above;

(d) Use the outcome of the present review as a basis for responding to the request of the General Assembly (see para. 4 above) that each functional commission of the Economic and Social Council report on its methods of work, in order better to pursue the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits;

(e) Consider the need for further review of the international arrangement, in order that it continue to be dynamic and adapt to evolving conditions, and consider ways of helping member States to participate actively in such a review.

Notes

[1] The members of CPF are: Center for International Forestry Research; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Tropical Timber Organization; International Union of Forestry Research Organizations; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; World Agroforestry Centre; World Bank; World Conservation Union; and the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Global Environment Facility; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the United Nations Forum on Forests.

[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 22* (E/2002/42), chap. II, sect. B.

[3] See ibid., *2004, Supplement No. 22* (E/2004/42 and Corr.1), chap. I, sect. B.

[4] An unofficial working draft of an analytical study, which contains a more detailed analysis of the reports and responses, is available for information, in English only, on the Forum's web site (http://www.un.org/esa/forests/). Individual reports and responses are also available on the web site.

[5] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 22* (E/2001/42/Rev.1), part two, chap. I, sect. B, resolution 1/1.

[6] The guidelines and a suggested format for national reports (see para. 2 above) list the thematic issues discussed at previous sessions of the Forum and provide cross-references to the proposals for action.

[7] More details about the activities of CPF members in relation to this thematic element, and others, are available in the CPF frameworks, submitted to the Forum as information papers.

[8] The questionnaire identified a number of activities of the international arrangement, including "contacts made at Forum sessions" and "ad hoc expert groups". Further details are available in the notes on the voluntary questionnaire and in the individual responses to it, available on the Forum web site.

[9] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 22* (E/2002/42), chap. II, sect. B, resolution 2/1.

Annex

Responses to the questionnaire: overall assessment of the effectiveness of international arrangement on forests

	Responses from member States and the European Union (EU)[a]					*Responses from representatives of major groups*[b]				
Specific criterion	*None*	*Limited*	*Moderate*	*High*		*None*	*Limited*	*Moderate*	*High*	
(a) Principal function: Implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action										
(i)		4+EU	9	1			1	2		
(ii)		6	3+EU	4				1	1	
(iii)		3	6+EU	2			1		2	
(iv)		8+EU	3	1			1			
(v)	2	1	5+EU	3			1			
(b) Principal function: Forum for continued policy development and dialogue										
(i)		4	4+EU	5			1		2	
(ii)		1+EU	7	3			1	1	1	
(iii)		4	3	2+EU			1			
(iv)		4+EU	3	6			1		1	
(c) Principal function: Cooperation and policy and programme coordination										
(i)		6+EU	4	3			1			
(ii)		3+EU	4	4			1		1	
(d) Principal function: International cooperation										
(i)		3	4+EU	3			1	1		
(ii)		3+EU	6	2						
(e) Principal function: Monitoring and assessing progress through reporting										
(i)		7	2+EU	2			2			
(ii)		4	4+EU	1			2			
(iii)		9+EU	1	1			1	1		
(iv)		3	5	1			1			
(v)		4+EU	4	2			1			
(vi)		3	8+EU	2			1			
(f) Principal function: Strengthening political commitment										
(i)		1	4+EU	5		1		1		
(ii)			9+EU	1		1			1	

[a] Some countries stated that effectiveness was, for example, both moderate and high for a particular criterion; in such cases, both assessments are recorded.

[b] Confederation of European Forest Owners, FERN/Forest Peoples' Programme, and workers and trade unions.